The principal purpose of this class is to introduce you to the philosophy of mind. As I understand this, it involves introducing you to the construction of theories about the mind that support explanation and prediction. We begin with the assumption that ‘mind’ picks out some one type of thing that can be investigated. If in fact the term picks out a single type of thing, then our efforts may prove fruitful. However, it is important to recognize up front that we might be wrong about this—we might be mistakenly classifying together what appear to be but in fact are not related phenomena. Under the influence of intuition and common sense, we might be seeing unity where exists only disparity. If so, then if we are lucky, we will realize this and modify the nature of our investigation. Further, it is also worth noting that even if it does pick out a single type of thing, that thing might be fully dependent on the surrounding theory (even if it is a folk theory) for its existence, much like latitudes and point masses. This will also have an effect on the shape of our theory. However, at this point, it is worth charging ahead in pursuit of an independently existing thing out there in the world.

There are four preliminary to identify before we go too far:

1. **Identify the Explanandum.** That is, what is the thing to be explained? In the case of the mind, this is not necessarily clear. From the first-person perspective, we have ample evidence concerning its existence and character, but the third-person perspective gives us only equivocal evidence at best. But if the account is intended to be objective in the end, dovetailing with scientific accounts of cognitive activity, then we had better figure out how to identify objectively the thing we recognize subjectively. The subjective fix might be an adequate start, but it will need to give way at some point to an alternative way of identifying the mind.

2. **Identify the Character of the Explanans.** That is, what is the character of the explanation we aim at? If we don’t have an idea about this, it will be difficult to know when we have finished the job. For our purposes, the explanans will be a theoretical model of mentality that can be integrated with biological and psychological accounts of the same range of phenomena. (This consideration addresses our motivation for pursuing this investigation.)
3. **Identify a Strategy.** What methods should one employ? What are the relevant principles to apply as we make judgments about the phenomena we consider? As we are doing philosophy, our methods and strategies will be fundamentally conceptual. However, even so, there are a variety of methods that we should consider here:

   a. **Analytic:** begin by analyzing the language we use when talking about the mind, drawing general lessons about mind from this.

   b. **Subjective:** employ introspective techniques to derive, develop, and defend claims about mentality; one can build a theory out of this and have it gain acceptance if others can repeat for themselves the same results via application of the same techniques.

   c. **Objective:** using observation and empirical methods, derive, develop, and defend hypotheses about the mind that fit together into a naturalistic theory; the theory will be a theory of concepts, but it will make those concepts essentially responsive to the world.

   In addition, there are other points of strategy that we might want to consider here. For example, do we develop our account bottom up, starting with individual instances of mind (or perhaps individual characteristics of mind) and then generalize to a more extensive analysis? Or alternatively, should we develop the account top down, starting with a general analysis and then testing it by application to candidate instances? (As was noted, most of the time we employ both, although one of them typically dances the lead.)

4. **Identify a Starting Point.** Where do we start? Generally, (3) and (4) come together—you make a strategic/methodological decision, and it has consequences for your starting points. If you are proceeding bottom up, your starting point will be inspection of paradigmatic instances of mind; if you are proceeding top down, your starting point will be a priori conceptual analysis. And objective approach will get you out into the world; a subjective approach, by contrast, will result in the closing of your eyes followed by intense concentration. Through all of the alternatives, though, concepts will play a large and important role, and they will be the primary focus when you launch the investigation.

In class, we applied a bottom up approach to the mind, focusing on characteristics that were regarded as central to the phenomenon of mentality. The list was built with the help of both objective and subjective insights. We began to systematically organize the items in the list, looking to group things by logical category (e.g., function, or feature, or context, or …), and by their generality or specificity. Further development of the list
would see us develop these groupings in the hope of creating a kind of “map of the mind”, tracing relationships among characteristics in a way that captures the nature of mentality. If we’re lucky, of course.